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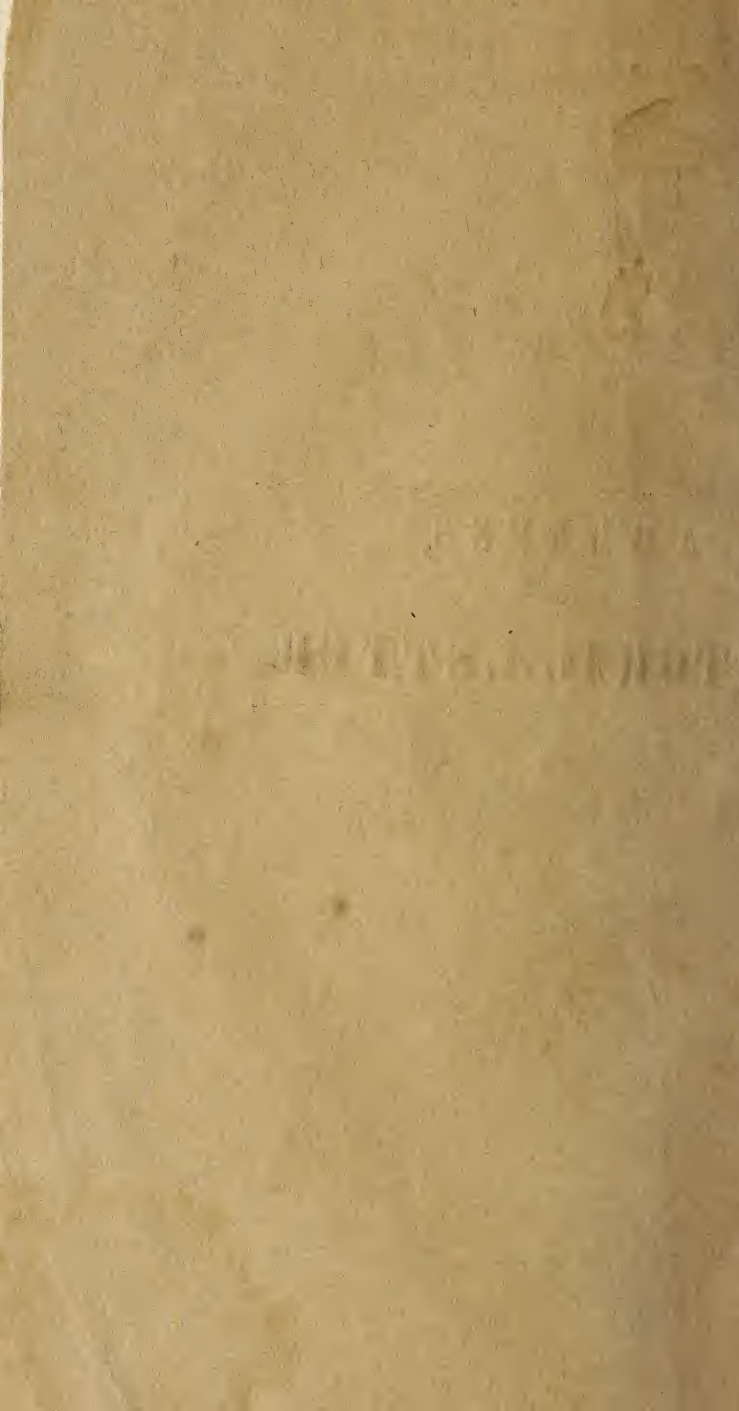
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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A D D R E S S,
OR
A S T O R A L L E T T E R.



ADDRESS

OR

PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE

MINISTRY AND MEMBERSHIP

OF THE

✓
GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH.

Chambersburg, Pa.

Printed at the Office of the "Weekly Messenger," WASHINGTON, 2d. st.

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ADDRESS.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

At the late meeting of the Synod of the German Reformed Church, held in Carlisle, Pa., the undersigned were appointed a Committee to prepare and circulate an *Address or Pastoral Letter* to the Churches, under the care of Synod, on the relations which our baptized, yet unconfirmed members sustain to the visible Church, and the duties which grow out of those relations. This subject came up before Synod through reference by the Classis of Maryland, and elicited an earnest, protracted, and interesting discussion. It was considered a subject of very great importance by the whole Synod, and when the following minute, prepared by a special Committee, was offered for the consideration of that body, it was unanimously adopted.

The Committee to whom was referred the minute of the Classis of Maryland, touching the baptized, yet unconfirmed membership of our Church, beg leave to say, that they have had the subject referred to them under serious consideration, and have agreed to offer the following minute, for the adoption of this body, it being substantially the same, in some of its features, as that adopted by the Classis.

Whereas all baptized persons, whether infants or adults, are members of the visible Church of Christ, and should be recognized and treated as such; and *Whereas*, it appears that many baptized adults in our connexion, as well as in others, have not correct scriptural views of the relations they sustain to the Church, and *Whereas* it is of vast importance to them personally, and to the interests of the Church generally, that they *should* properly understand these relations, as well as the duties which grow out of them, therefore

Resolved 1st, That we deeply deplore this state of things, and earnestly desire a speedy removal of the causes which have led to its existence, and which are chiefly to be found, doubtless, in the too common neglect of family religion, and the want of proper parental instruction and influence, as well as in a want, in many instances, of ministerial attention and faithfulness.

2nd. That the great importance of Bible and Catechetical instruction, of covenant and Church relations, of family religion, of confirmation, of the sacraments; and of all those means of grace and helps to salvation which are enjoyed in the visible Church, has been too much overlooked, of late years especially, and that it is necessary, in view of our well-being as a Church, and of the interests of religion in general, to return at once, in these regards, to the old land-marks which our fathers have set, and to endeavor to infuse, under God, a proper Christian life into all the forms and customs of the Church, for without such life we shall have the form of godliness, without its spirit and its power.

3rd. That it be earnestly recommended to all our ministers to give immediate attention to this subject, to bring it before our people from the pulpit, and to discuss, explain, and enforce it, in such a manner and to such an extent, as may be deemed best calculated to accomplish the object in view.

4th. That in the discharge of the duty of family visitation, it be particularly enjoined upon all the ministers of this Synod, to bring this subject to the notice of parents and children, and endeavor to suitably impress their minds with its interest and importance.

5th. That it be made the duty, in an especial manner, of all our ministers, to look after that portion of the youthful membership of our Church, who in the providence of God are deprived of parental care, and have no one to sympathize with them in their state of spiritual destitution and to comfort them in their temporal distresses.

6th. That we not only regard all baptized persons as members of the visible Church, subject to its teachings, admonitions and pastoral care, but that we consider it to be our duty to make immediate efforts to ascertain the names of all baptized, yet unconfirmed persons in our communion, and in all our intercourse with them to treat them as members of the visible Church, subject to its order and entitled to its covenant blessings.

7th. That it be enjoined upon the respective Classes to furnish Synod, in their annual reports, with the number of all baptized, as well as all confirmed members under their care, and that the Stated Clerk be directed to open a column in the Statistical reports of this body,

for all baptized, yet unexcommunicated members of our Church.

8:h. That a Committee be appointed to prepare an address or pastoral letter to all our Churches on the topics noticed in this paper, and to have it published in the periodicals of the Church, and in any other form they may see fit, provided Synod is not thereby involved in any pecuniary expense.

The reasons which induced Synod to prepare and adopt the above Minute, may more fully appear in the course of some remarks, to which we beg leave, respectfully and affectionately, to invite your serious and prayerful attention. It is not our design to enter upon the discussion of any polemical questions, farther than may be deemed necessary to a correct understanding and a proper appreciation of the important subject now to be considered.

The report, adopted by the Synod, asserts, that all baptized persons, whether infants or adults, are members of the visible Church of Christ, and should be recognized and treated as such—that many baptized adults, in our communion, have not correct views of the relations they sustain to the Church—that it is of vast importance to them personally, and to the interests of the Church generally, that they *should* properly understand these relations and the things which make for their peace in this regard—and that all such persons are subject to the teachings, admonitions, and special oversight of the Church. To a brief consideration of these and kindred topics, we now invite your attention.

It is presumed no one will question that it is necessary, at least highly important to the temporal and spiritual well-being of families who are in covenant with God, that they should rightly understand the intimate and deeply interesting relations they sustain to the Church of Christ, and the duties which belong to such relations. The minute of Synod, in regard to Church membership, declares that *all baptized persons* are members of the visible Church. This, doubtless, is true; but it is also true, we think, that *all those who are included in God's gracious covenant with men, are members of his outward Church*, though they may not have received the appointed token of such membership.

In order that this subject may be presented in its true and proper light, and that all interested may understand it fully, let us endeavor to ascertain in this place, *What it is that constitutes Church Membership; or, Who are members of the visible Church?* This is a question of much importance and of very deep interest to us all. Let us look at it in the light of the Holy Scriptures, and try to understand it, as it is there presented to our minds. If the Spirit direct us in our inquiries, and for which direction we fervently pray, we shall be able to see the truth, and to walk in the right way.

The Scriptures teach, that *all professedly believing parents and their offspring, are members of God's visible Church.* This is a broad proposition, but the true one, as a little examination and reflection will enable us to see. Let it be remembered that at no time has God been without a Church and people in the world. From Adam onward, there has always been a seed to serve the Lord. But it was not until the days of Abraham that God entered into formal covenant with his people and their offspring. Some two thousand years before Christ, God called Abraham to his service, and admitted him to membership in his family. He entered into a most solemn covenant with Abraham and his seed, as we learn from the 17th Chapter of the book of Genesis. The covenant engagement, proper, is in these words. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." The covenant of God with Abraham and his offspring implied, that the former had blessings to bestow, and the latter duties to discharge.

Now it will be observed, that God entered into formal covenant relations with *both Abraham and his children.* "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, in their generations—to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." It will also be noted, that the covenant itself was *to continue throughout all time.* It was established, *in the generations* of God's people, "*for an everlasting covenant.*" This was the *nature, extent and duration* of the Abrahamic covenant, the original *sign and seal* of which was *circumcision*, as we learn from the Chapter in Genesis already referred to. "Every man-child among you shall be circumci-

sed, and it shall be a *token* of the covenant between me and thee." You will observe that circumcision was no part of the Abrahamic covenant, but only the original sign and seal of that covenant; and we say the *original* sign or token, because it was in time to be superseded by another. The *covenant itself* was to remain unaltered throughout all time, but the *token and seal* of the covenant were to be changed—as we shall presently see—and suited to a new order of things under another and a better dispensation. Now, what was it that entitled the pious patriarch and his children to the right of membership in God's Church? Was it *circumcision*? Certainly not, for that was only the *token* of the covenant—it was a sign, a manifestation, a declaration of Church membership. Membership existed previously, and was founded on the *stipulations of the covenant*. Circumcision was administered as a token or recognition of covenant relations and church membership, and *was founded on membership, and not membership on circumcision*. Those who were in covenant, had a right to circumcision, as a sign and seal of the covenant, *because they belonged to the visible Church of God*. The uncovenanted had no right to circumcision, because they were without the pale of the visible Church. With such, circumcision would have been a unmeaning useless ceremony, because there was nothing for which it could have been either a sign or a seal. Its subject must be in covenant, or in the Church, in order to give it meaning and importance. Abraham was a child of God and a member of his family fourteen years before he was circumcised. With him God entered into solemn covenant relations, and *because* he had entered into such relations with him and had admitted him to formal communion with himself, he required that he should be circumcised, as a sign and seal of covenant engagements and church relations. Abraham being in covenant, or in the Church, which is the same thing, was entitled to circumcision. Circumcision, then, was based on membership, and not membership on circumcision, and cannot be regarded, strictly speaking, in the light of an *initiatory* ordinance. It is spoken of as a *token* of the covenant, and not as a *means* by which a person was introduced into covenant relations. Under the Old Testament dispensation, circumcision was rath-

er the formal acknowledgment, or declaration, of membership ; but not the means of bringing persons into the Church. Those who were in covenant were members before they were circumcised ; members even at their birth, by virtue of the stipulations of the covenant, and circumcision may be considered that act by which they were formally recognized, as persons included in the covenant, and to whom rightfully belonged all the blessings comprehended in it.

From what has just been said, it appears that professed believers and their offspring were included in the covenant and Church of God ; that they were all members of the Church by virtue of covenant stipulations, and that they received circumcision, not so much as an *initiatory* rite, a rite by which they became members of the Church, but rather as a solemn *token* or *declaration* of membership which already existed. And this view of the subject is greatly strengthened by another consideration, which is to be found in the fact, that God commanded "*the uncircumcised man-child to be cut off from his people, because he had broken his covenant.*" Gen. 17, 14. The excommunication spoken of in this passage, had reference, doubtless, to such as might grow up without circumcision ; and who, on attaining to years of understanding, refused or neglected to receive the ordinance. If, on reaching mature years, they remained uncircumcised, they were to be cut off from God's people, and excluded from the enjoyment of all the blessings of the covenant. They were to be considered as having *broken* the covenant, and despising the appointment of God. The punishment inflicted upon such, was exclusion from the Church, and from all right to covenant benefits and blessings. But how could they be thus excluded, if they were not *in* the Church ? The very fact, that such are said to have broken the covenant and were to be excommunicated on that account, shows that they must have been in covenant with God, without circumcision. Such was the case. They were born in covenant, and belonged to God's visible Church, but inasmuch as they failed to comply with the ordinance of circumcision, after they grew up to years of understanding, they were to be cut off from the Church, and excluded from all participation in the bles-

sings comprehended in these words, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

We are now prepared to inquire, how is it, in this regard, under the *New Testament* economy? Has the covenant, or the token of the covenant, or both, undergone any change? Do professedly believing parents and their offspring sustain the same relations to the New Testament Church, that Abraham and seed sustained to the Church under the old dispensation? To this we answer, that "when Christ appeared on the earth, the Old dispensation, having fulfilled its grand design, was set aside to give place to the New one; the Church now assumed a different aspect; its external ordinances, ceremonies, sacrifices, and so forth, which referred to, and prefigured Christ, especially in his mediatorial character, were necessarily abolished, because they all centered, and received their accomplishment in him. Circumcision, one of the ordinances of the old economy, shared the same fate; it was abolished to make room for Christian Baptism, an institution better adapted to the simplicity, increased light, and more easy yoke of the New Testament dispensation. The Abrahamic *Covenant* however, was not and could not be abrogated, because that was designed to be an "*everlasting covenant*," embracing "Abraham and his seed in all generations." While the covenant, therefore, by which the Church of God was organized, continued the same, the sign and seal of that covenant was altered; circumcision was repealed and baptism instituted." Once the token, sign, manifestation of membership, was circumcision; now, Christian baptism. But the *covenant itself*, existing through all time, is of course the same under both dispensations, "ordered in all things and sure." And as all circumcised persons and their offspring, were embraced in the covenant and Church of God, under the Old dispensation, and as the covenant itself continues without any change, addition or subtraction, it being proclaimed by God himself to be an "*everlasting covenant*," it is easy to see who constitute the Church under the New Testament economy—*Christian parents and their offspring*. As children under the Old dispensation were members of God's Church by virtue of their birth from professedly believing parents, and the solemn stipulations of the covenant, as well as by virtue of the death of Him who

appeared in due time as the sum and substance of all the Jewish types and shadows, so are children under the New dispensation members of God's Church, in view of the same solemn and important considerations. They are in the visible Church in virtue of the stipulations of the Abrahamic covenant, as well as in virtue of their birth from Christian parents and the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Our own excellent *Heidelberg Catechism* declares, that children should be baptized, on the ground that they, as well as the adult, *are included in the covenant and Church of God*, and because redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them, no less than to the adult. It will be perceived that the Catechism bases the right of infants to baptism on membership, and regards membership as existing by virtue of the Abrahamic covenant.

We have just at hand a very able article on this branch of our subject, from the pen of one of the most gifted divines of the German Reformed Church in this country, a brief extract from which we beg leave to introduce in this place.

"It is a common sentiment," says the writer, "that the baptism of children makes them members of the Church, but this is an error, their baptism does not make them members, it only recognizes their right of membership already existing; their membership is not founded upon their baptism, but their baptism upon their membership; and whether that seal of the covenant be applied to them or not, they are (in case of believing parents) not without, but within the pale of the Church. Is any one disposed to object, 'how can children be members of the Church without their own consent?' I reply, that with equal propriety it might be asked, how can they be made members of the civil state, or created rational beings, without their consent. It is their birth right, their privilege, and none the less such because it is a common one or greatly perverted."

Such, then, are the grounds upon which are based the rights and privileges of Christian parents and their offspring, to membership in the Church of God. The ground taken is broad ground, but it is believed to be the true and Scriptural one. According to the view here taken of church membership, all children born of Chris-

tian parents, whether baptized or unbaptized, are in the visible Church; but then it must be observed that the membership is not as full and complete in the case of unbaptized, as baptized persons. The latter, too, have rights and privileges in the Church, which the former have not. Whilst all are in the Church, by virtue of the stipulations of the covenant, yet only those who have received baptism as a *token* and *seal* of the covenant, have Scriptural claims to covenant promises and blessings. Being in the Church gives a person a right to baptism; but it does not, of itself, entitle any one to the blessings of the covenant. To be entitled to these, it is not only necessary as it would seem, to be in the visible Church; but also to have the sign and seal of membership upon us.

The situation of unbaptized persons in the Church, may be compared to that of a man who has been elected to fill some civil office, but who has never been properly qualified for it, by passing through what might be called the *ceremony* of office. He is a citizen of the State, a member of the civil compact, and duly elected by the people to fill an office of trust in the state—but still, he cannot take the chair of office, and exercise the rights, enjoy the privileges, and perform the duties of the office, until the ceremony of *initiation*, or *installation*, is performed. Just so it is with children born of Christian parents. They are in the Church, elected by God himself to membership in the Church; but yet, they have no valid right to enjoy the privileges and blessings of members, until they have received Christian baptism, as a sign and seal of their membership, and of their right and privilege to enjoy all the blessings which the great Head of the Church has purchased for, and promised to, his people, under the new and better dispensation.

Let it not be said, then, that in our view of Church-membership, Christian baptism is undervalued. We think it is the only view that gives baptism its proper place, as an ordinance of vast meaning and importance in the Church of God. According to this view, children and adults may be in the visible Church, and yet not entitled to its privileges and blessings. To have a Bible right to enjoy the benefits of the covenant, they should receive baptism as a token and seal of such right, and thus be formally recognized as members of God's Church,

entitled to the exercise and enjoyment of all its blessed privileges. Who does not see, in this view of the subject, that our unbaptized as well as baptized membership, could be admonished in the most solemn and earnest manner in reference to their spiritual and eternal interests. Motives of the most powerful character might be addressed to them, with a view of inducing them to repent of sin, confess Christ, and receive Christian baptism as a sign and seal of Church relations, and covenant blessings.

It is not intended here to raise the question, whether, in order to salvation, it is *indispensably necessary* to be in the visible Church, and to receive the ordinance of baptism. All that we now have to say, is, that it is *highly important* to salvation to be in the outward Church of Jesus Christ.

We have already clearly intimated, if not fully stated, that there are rich covenant blessings secured to all those households who are within the pale of the visible Church—that membership, or rather the recognition of membership, gives a person the right and privilege to enjoy all the ordinances and blessings of the Church and the whole of that salvation which has been purchased for the Church by her glorious Head. To the enjoyment of New Testament blessings, all baptized persons have an *indisputable Gospel right*, and they have such right in view of covenant relations and Christ's atonement. If others, those who are not within the pale of the visible Church, enjoy the benefits of the Church and the blessings of salvation, all that we have to say is, that it is not the *ordinary way* in which men are brought into their possession. A man may be enlightened, converted, and saved, doubtless, without being in the visible Church ; or, if in the Church, without the formal recognition of membership. It does not certainly appear that the *penitent thief* was saved through the visible Church ; but his case, and all such cases must be regarded as altogether unusual and extraordinary. God has established a Church in the world, and it would be safe to say, we think, that his usual, and indeed almost only mode of saving men, is not only *through*, but *in* his visible Church. And here permit us to affirm, lest it might be thought we make too much account of the Church, and too little of Christ, that no

one is saved but *by, through, and in Christ Jesus*, whilst many will be lost, doubtless, who are simply within the pale of the outward Church. What we wish to say is, that the usual, ordinary way of saving men is through and in the Church, not wishing at all to intimate, that it is utterly impossible, under any circumstances, to get to Christ and be saved, except it be through the visible Church. If any of the *heathen* are saved, it is through Christ, and not the outward Church. They are saved, if saved at all, by virtue of Christ's atonement, like their little children, and like *all* little children who die before they are old enough to know good from evil. But we must repeat, that the ordinary way of saving men is through and in the visible Church, for it is there that *those means and influences* are enjoyed, which are *highly important*, if not absolutely necessary to salvation. This is the divinely appointed way, and if there is any deviation from it, on the part of God and in some cases there undoubtedly is, such deviation must be referred to the sovereignty of God, whose good pleasure it may be, under certain circumstances, and for the accomplishment of high and benevolent purposes, to show mercy and extend salvation to some who are not within the pale of the Church militant. God governs the universe by established laws, and yet it has been his good pleasure, at times, to deviate from those laws, and carry on his work in some miraculous way. If he does this in the kingdom of nature, why may he not do similar things in the kingdom of grace? Why may he not, in his own sovereign pleasure, occasionally save some, as he did the penitent malefactor, who have no formal connection with the outward Church? That some such are saved, is beyond a doubt. But this, as has been already observed, is not the ordinary way of saving men from sin, and preparing them for heaven. The usual, regular way, so to speak, is not only *through* but *in* the visible Church. And indeed, it must be confessed, that it is not easy to see how men, who enjoy Gospel light and privileges, can be considered hopeful candidates for heaven, no matter how moral and religious they may seem to be, if they wilfully neglect the positive institutions of Christianity, refuse to openly profess Christ, and unite themselves, formerly, with his Church and people. God has not only given us his

Son to be our light and our salvation, but he has established his Church in the world, for the attainment of high and glorious ends. It is *through* the Church that the Gospel is preached, and it is *in* the Church that those means and influences are enjoyed which are so necessary for the illumination, conversion, sanctification, and salvation of men.

The visible Church of Christ, the great organized family of professed believers and their offspring, *means something*—much more than *some men think* it does. As God has established his Church among men, and has enjoined it upon those to whom the Gospel becomes known, to confess Christ and unite themselves with his Church and people, it is not a matter of little moment whether we belong to it or not. Whilst we would hold up Christ, and whilst we delight and glory in holding him up, as the *way, the truth and the life*,—as the *Savior*, and as the *only* Savior of men—as that blessed One in whom all our hopes of heaven centre, we would at the same time, attach very great importance to his Church, which he has established in the world, for the purpose of enlightening, converting, comforting and saving men, and for the brightest and most glorious displays of Jehovah's character and mind. The Church, with all its ordinances, sacraments, means of grace, and so forth, *is of vast account in the matter of our salvation*. It is not only a high and blessed *privilege* to be in the visible Church, but *highly important*, to say the least, to a saving interest in Christ, and a Bible title to glory. Those who are in the Church, stand within the pale of covenant engagements and relations, and are therefore proper subjects, so to speak, for the enjoyment of covenant privileges and blessings. To such the word and sacraments may and do prove a rich blessing, when rightly used, fitting them for communion with God in this world, and preparing them for his everlasting enjoyment in the next. That there is a difference, and a very great difference too, in the condition of those who are within, and those who are without the pale of the Church militant, there can be no reasonable doubt. Those who are within the pale of the visible Church, and who have had their membership properly recognized, have advantages and blessings of the highest importance and deepest interest promised and secu-

red to them ; whilst those who are without, enjoy no such promises and security. The former enjoy grace and opportunities, which, if rightly improved, will secure to them the blessings of conversion, sanctification and complete redemption ; whilst the latter, the unbaptized, seem to be almost wholly destitute of these grounds of hope. They are not recognizedly in covenant, and therefore not in a condition, as it would seem, to enjoy covenant blessings.

In all this it is not intended to intimate, much less to teach, that persons are born again by water baptism. We hold that not the least change takes place in the spiritual *being* of the person baptized. Baptism is not even the *spiritual conception* of a new creation, much less is it the new creation itself. Baptism is not conversion, or the new birth ; it is not even regeneration, if by that term we are to understand the *beginning*, simply, of the great change and not the great change itself. By nature, men are dead in trespasses and in sins, and to awake them from their sleep of death, and to breathe into them spiritual life, so that they may arise and live, is the work, the great, the mighty, the wondrous work of the *Holy Spirit*, by means of the *word* and *truth* of God. But still, baptism does something, it does much, for us. Whilst it does not change our *being*, it alters our *condition*, *most materially*, by *placing us in circumstances highly favorable, if not really necessary to salvation*. So that to be in the visible Church, acknowledgeably so, is an unspeakable blessing, a blessing which all, in Gospel lands, may, if they will, enjoy.

Having said thus much on the nature and importance of church relations, and of the sacraments of God's house, especially Christian baptism, we will proceed to notice some other items in the proceedings now under consideration.

In the minute of Synod, already referred to, and now being considered, it is said, that "many of our baptized adults have not correct views of the relations they sustain to the Church, and that it is of vast importance to them personally, and to the well being of the Church generally, that they should have correct, scriptural views of these relations, and of the duties which necessarily grow out of them."

It is believed that no one will feel disposed to call in question the truth of these statements. It cannot be doubted, we think, that this great subject of Church relations, in all its vast and important bearings, is but very imperfectly understood by our baptized membership in general. Who does not know that vague and incorrect ideas prevail in regard to it, amongst children, parents, heads of families, and even ministers of the Gospel? Look abroad in the Church, and you will find, as the Synod asserts, that in many instances, our baptized membership grow up without proper religious instruction; without understanding the important and deeply interesting relations they sustain to the Church; without confirmation, and without an open, public profession of their faith in Christ. It is an undeniable fact that Bible and Catechetical instruction has almost been wholly neglected in some parts of the Church, and in others, regarded as of little or no account. In some sections of the Church, too, it is almost impossible to prevail upon the baptized youth of the Church to attend a course of Catechetical instruction, by which their minds might be properly impressed and renewed, and they themselves fitted for confirmation and the holy communion. There are thousands of baptized persons in our connexion who are living without the benefit of Christian instruction and confirmation. Among this class of persons you may find some, and perhaps many, who do not regard themselves as belonging to the Church in any sense, and who seem to take pleasure in denying that they are members, and even glory at times in such denial. They are under the erroneous impression that they are not in the Church, and that they can, therefore, live as they please. Others, those who are in the Church, are bound to live a Christian life; but they, being out of the Church, are at liberty to live as they list. What a delusion! And how serious and awful the consequences!

If those who are in covenant with God, had correct, scriptural views of this great subject, we should not see so many of them living without the sign and seal of the covenant. We would see the unbaptized portion of those in covenant, coming forward to receive at the hands of the ministry, the manifestation and recognition of membership in God's Church, by being made the

subjects of Christian baptism, and thus more fully and certainly brought into the enjoyment of the means of salvation. We would see our *baptized* membership, eagerly embracing every fitting opportunity to be religiously instructed, and to be prepared for confirmation and a public profession of their faith in Christ. If right views prevailed among such, they would doubtless gladly come forward, and claim and enjoy their high, blood bought privileges in the Church. They would then as soon think of denying their citizenship in the State, and of refusing to enjoy the blessings which are promised and secured to them under the Constitution of the State, as think of denying their membership in God's Church, and refusing to enjoy the privileges and benefits to which they have, by solemn covenant, an unquestionable Gospel right. Our children have *birth right privileges* in the visible Church, by virtue of covenant engagements and relations, and it is to be most deeply regretted that they do not understand them better, and appreciate them more. They understand, somewhat the relations they sustain to the *State* but not to the *Church*. Who among them would think of denying their citizenship, and of excluding themselves from the enjoyment of those privileges and blessings which are secured to them by the glorious constitution under which they live? They know that in consequence of citizenship, they have precious rights secured to them, and which they can at any time, and at all times, claim and enjoy. How very jealous they are of those rights! With what cheerful spirit and manly pride do they exercise those rights! What pleasure it affords them to speak of them, and how much they glory in them, and in *all* the civil privileges which they enjoy, and enjoy *because* they are members of the national compact! And ought not our children rejoice and be thankful, because they have rights and privileges in the *Church*, as well as the *State*? Nay more, ought they not to rejoice greatly and continually, because they are in the Church, and being in the Church, in the enjoyment of the dearest rights and most precious privileges? Rather than be sorry or deny, that they belong to the Church, they ought to bless God, and rejoice evermore. They have cause, too, to thank their parents a thousand times for what they have done for them, and if they are dead,

they should gratefully cherish their memory throughout all time. Sooner let them be ashamed of, or disown and renounce their connection with the State, than with the Church. But as they cannot well do this in the one case, so neither can they in the other. In neither case can they *easily destroy* their rights, though they may refuse to *exercise* them.

The state of things in the Church, that we have just contemplated, is very sad indeed. Who amongst us does not *know*, who does not *feel*, that it is such. Where is the minister, where the layman, who does not from his inmost soul desire the removal of the *causes* which have led to this sad state of things, and to witness another and a better ?

But what are some of the causes which are supposed to have produced the evils here complained of? Let Synod herself furnish the answer. It is found in the first resolution of the minute that she adopted, and is as follows :

“*Resolved*, That we deeply deplore this state of things, (the state of things to which we have just adverted, and which is noticed in the preamble to this and the other resolutions,) and earnestly desire a speedy removal of the causes which have led to its existence, and which are chiefly to be found, doubtless, in the too common neglect of family religion, and in a want of proper parental instruction and influence, as well as in a want, in many instances, of ministerial attention and faithfulness.

The first cause here assigned for the existence of the state of things to which we have just called attention, is, *the too common neglect of family religion, and the absence of proper parental instruction and influence*. That family religion is at low ebb amongst us, there can scarcely be a doubt. It is pleasing to know, indeed, that some suitable attention has all along been given to this great subject by some families, and that in many others a becoming interest is being excited ; but still, a vast number of our families seem to be strangers to those holy and blessed influences which are always found to rest upon decidedly Christian households. In how many families in our communion, as well as in others, is the song of praise never sung ; the voice of prayer never heard ; and the reading and explanation of the Scrip-

tures never attended to ? There are no family altars established, around which old and young, parents and children, masters and servants may gather, to offer up to God the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. No priest, no priestess can be found to conduct the important exercises of family worship, and to suitably impress the younger membership of the family and of the Church, with the great concerns of the soul and of the eternal world. The Bible is seldom read, perhaps never made the subject of pointed and practical remark to the children and youth. Catechetical instruction is neglected. Household relations and responsibilities to the Church are neither understood nor cared for. Parents and heads of families manifest no becoming interest in regard to these highly important and deeply interesting subjects, and the consequence is, that most of the children and youth grow up without religious knowledge ; without a proper understanding of Church relations and responsibilities ; without the benefit of prayerful and pious example ; without being brought to a proper knowledge of the Gospel, and to make an open profession of their faith in Christ, and without that reverence for and delight in, sacred things in general, which are so necessary to their peace here, and happiness hereafter. . In the families of such, too, it often happens that there is no proper *government*. Parental authority and rule have departed ; perhaps never existed. Children govern parents, instead of parents children. This was not the case so much in former days. Once parents ruled their children, but now children rule their parents. Who does not see and deplore the consequences ? If children will read the Bible, go to Church, learn the Catechism, repent of sin, receive confirmation, and lead a prayerful and pious life, well ; if not, it is well again. There is no proper instruction given ; no suitable authority exercised ; and no scriptural example set by the heads of households, and it is not therefore to be wondered at, that confusion, disorder, and irreligion have often universal sway. Hundreds of parents and heads of families manifest an indifference here, yea gross neglect, that is, not only highly culpable, but a great sin ; and how will they be able to answer for it to God, to their children, to the Church, to their own consciences ? In view of the retributions of eternity, they should fear and tremble.

It would be well if such would now remember at least one solemn declaration of the word of God, "I will pour out my fury upon the nations that know me not, and the families that call not upon my name." Before long they shall meet their children, whose interests they have so much neglected, at the bar of God. Oh, how shall they be able to stand in the judgment of the great day, if they have neglected the souls of their children, and find that their garments are stained with their blood ! What a scene will there be witnessed, when parents shall see, that through their neglect, in part at least, their children are unprepared to enter into the Church triumphant, and must be forever excluded from the heavenly mansions ! May God in his mercy, speedily arouse such from their slumbers, lest they and their children perish forever !

The state of things in the Church which the Synod deplores and over which they mourn, is attributable, they say, not only to the too common neglect of family religion, and a want of proper parental instruction and authority, but also to a "*want, in many instances, of ministerial attention and faithfulness.*"

It is surely a matter of some deep concern that the *ministry* should be blamed, and found wanting, in regard to this subject. Surely *they* ought to be attentive to the youthful membership of the Church, and faithful to their spiritual and eternal interests. This they promised to be at their Ordination, when they were solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry, and also when they were installed as pastors or bishops over God's heritage. Our ordination and installation services, as found in the Liturgy of the Church, as well as the Constitution of the Church, make it obligatory upon the ministry to give special attention to the young. But the Synod say, and no doubt truly say, that this great subject is neglected by the ministry, at least in many instances. It is certain, that our baptized, to say nothing about our unbaptized youth, do not receive that attention at our hands which they ought to receive. They are in the Church, members of the Church, and subject, as the Synod say, to the *teachings, admonitions, and care* of the Church. Is it not the solemn duty of the *ministry* to look after the lambs of Christ's flock, and to make a faithful and proper use of all the means which God has appointed, for

their religious education, for the renewing and conversion of their souls, and for their final and eternal salvation in heaven? No other than an *affirmative* answer can be given to this question. But look abroad in the Church, and see how very imperfectly, in many instances, this great duty is discharged. The truth is, many of our ministers do not seem to fully understand the important and deeply interesting subject of *household connections* with God's Church. Baptized children even are regarded by many as out of the Church, until they have been confirmed, and have partaken of the Lord's Supper. Such are spoken of as *candidates* for Church membership, as persons who are expected to *join* the Church, and unite themselves with God's people. Now those who thus speak do not seem to understand, at least they do not remember, that all baptized youth are already in the Church, and that they should be recognized and treated as its members, subject to its order and entitled to its covenant blessings. It is certain that our youthful members are not looked after and cared for as they should be. Their best interests require the faithful and persevering attentions of the pastors of the Church. They should be visited under the parental roof, in the workshop, in the counting room, in the fields, the lanes, the hedges, the high ways, and in any place and all places where they be found. Some of our baptized membership are poor orphans, bound out to service, treated badly in some instances, and enjoy few or no earthly comforts. Their lot is indeed a hard one. They need, greatly need our sympathies, our counsels, our prayers, our constant and faithful attentions. Their parents before they bid them adieu in their last hours, recommended them, perhaps, to our friendly notice, and committed their spiritual interests to our hands, looking to God in fervent prayer for his blessing to rest upon our efforts to save their souls. And it may be that they could not close their eyes in death, until they had entrusted their beloved children to our watchful and pious care. Abroad in the wide world our baptized membership are scattered and it is a most sacred duty of the ministry to give them special attention. Our vows are upon us, as ministers and pastors in the Church, and we must perform them to Him in whose presence they were solemnly made. These lambs of the Redeemer's flock, scattered and faint,

poor and needy, must receive our special attention. We must go out after them, and rest not until we have found them, and introduced them once more to the Church and family of our blessed Lord. We must direct their minds to the things that relate to their peace, and endeavor to suitably impress them with the concerns of the eternal world. We must seek to interest them in the subject of the Church and of religion, and try to make it clear to them that they belong to the covenant and Church of God,—that it is their duty to attend, if they possibly can, all the Bible and Catechetical instructions of the Church ; to repent of their sins and forsake their evil ways ; to believe in and love the Savior ; to receive confirmation ; to partake of the Holy Supper ; to lead a prayerful and a Christian life—in a word, we must exercise a proper pastoral care over them, and watch for their souls as those who must give account. Let those of us who are ministers fear, lest through indifference, or neglect, we fail to perform our solemn duties to the baptized children and youth of our charges, and God enters into fearful controversy with us. At the last day it may be said, by the Master himself, to some ministers of the gospel, and perhaps to some of us, who may prove unfaithful to the youthful membership of the Church, especially to such as were poor orphans, cast upon the cold charity of the world at their parents' death—"Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto *one of the least* of these my brethren, ye have not done it unto me. Depart from me, I know you not." Oh, it will be a solemn thing for us, as ministers, to meet these lambs of Christ's flock at the judgment of the great day. In view, then, of all these important and deeply interesting considerations, let us as God's Ambassadors, and as pastors in Christ's Church, give immediate and faithful attention to this great subject, and leave no suitable means unemployed to save those to whom we preach, and those among whom we labor. This is what Synod recommends and enjoins in several of the resolutions which they adopted.

Resolved, 3rd. That it be earnestly recommended to all our ministers to give immediate attention to this subject, to bring it before our people from the pulpit, and to discuss, explain, and enforce it, in such a manner, and to such an extent, as may deem best calculated to accomplish the object in view.

4th. That in the discharge of the duty of family visitation, it be particularly enjoined upon all the ministers of the Synod, to bring this subject to the notice of parents and children, and endeavor to suitably impress their minds with its interest and importance.

5th. That, *it be made the duty, in an especial manner, of all our ministers, to look after that portion of the youthful membership of our Church, who in the Providence of God are deprived of parental care, and have no one to sympathize with them in their state of spiritual destitution, and to comfort them in their many distresses.*

Let us consider it our duty, forthwith to ascertain the names of all baptized, yet unconfirmed persons in our communion, or under our supervision, and in all our intercourse with them, to treat them as members of the visible Church, subject to its teachings, admonitions, and pastoral care. If the great importance of Bible and Catechetical instruction, of covenant and church relations, of family religion, of confirmation, of the sacraments, and of all these means of grace and helps to salvation which are enjoyed in the visible Church, has been too much overlooked of late years, let it be so no longer. In view of our well being as a Church, and of the interests of religion, in general let us return at once, in these regards, to the old landmarks which our fathers have set, and wake up to renewed and vigorous efforts in the glorious cause of Christ and his Church.

We should all *constantly seek and pray* to understand, better than we do, the deeply interesting relations our families sustain to the Church of Jesus Christ, and the duties which grow out of those relations. We should *talk and preach* more on these subjects, and not cease our efforts until our universal membership come to a proper knowledge of the things that make for their peace in this world, and for their happiness in the next. And it is gratifying to know, that the attention of the ministry and Church is being more and more directed, of late, to all these great and important matters—matters which most deeply concern us as a Church, as congregations, as families, and as individuals; and it is to be hoped that the discussion and action of Synod, will have a tendency to properly arouse the attention of the whole Church to these great and weighty subjects, and secure in the end

the full accomplishment of those high and blessed objects, which were aimed at by Synod when they adopted the minute to which your attention has been called in this address.

And now, dearly beloved brethren in the Lord, allow us to remind you, in conclusion, that we may expect a blessed revival of God's work in our midst if a becoming activity prevails amongst us, in regard to a proper, scriptural training of the baptized children of our Church. "Train up a child in the way he should go," and the promise is, "when he is old he will not depart from it." "If ye seek me early, ye shall find me." It is in youth, the spring time of life, that the heart is soft, the conscience tender, the affections warm, and that God can be easily sought and found. Youth is the season in which to sow the good seed of the kingdom, if we would reap a rich and glorious harvest for the Church, the Lamb's Bride. Let us all be deeply sensible of our great need of another baptism of the Holy Ghost, and let us daily look to God, with strong faith and fervent prayer, for his blessing upon our efforts, to train up our children and youth in the way of life. If we are importunate in prayer, strong in faith, judicious in efforts, and abundant in labors, we may confidently expect a season of constant and most blessed revival. There is every reason to believe that if the Church be truly faithful to her youthful membership, she shall have the pleasure of witnessing pure, and substantial, and constant revivals of religion, and of seeing the work of the Lord continually prospering in her hands. But in order to enjoy *such* revivals, it is necessary that there should be much suitable instruction imparted to our children and youth; that there should be much fervent and importunate prayer offered up, and renewed and vigorous efforts made to build up Zion, and enlarge the place of her habitation. O Lord, revive us, and our help shall come from Thee. To Thee, Oh God, the holy, the mighty One, we look for the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Grant us the desire of our hearts, and our souls will bless thee, yea we will magnify thy name forever and ever.

Yours, dear brethren, most truly and sincerely in the bonds of Christian love.

ELIAS HEINER,
SAMUEL GUTELIUS,
BERNARD C. WOLFF,
Baltimore, Nov. 20th, 1840.

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